

Chakiqpampa Travel Updates

Sustainability Without Borders in collaboration with *Comunidad* and the people of Chakiqpampa

July 2015



SWB – Peru travel experience

On May 1st, 2015, a Sustainability Without Borders (SWB) team began their journey from Ann Arbor, Michigan to the beautiful Paccha Valley in Peru. Their specific destination: the Chakiqpampa community. This was the second time members of SWB visited Chakiqpampa, the first being a Discovery Trip in November of 2014. Unlike the previous visit in which SWB and Comunidad members visited 8 different communities in the Paccha Valley, this time the team had the opportunity to stay in Chakiqpampa for two whole weeks. During those 14 days, SWB members would gather information about the community's well-being and water availability, engage with community members about their needs and priorities in terms of potential projects and, hopefully, come up with a plan for future collaborations with Chakiqpampa.



View of Chakiqpampa from the top of a mountain to the West of the community. Chakiqpampa is located in the Paccha Valley, Perú at around 11,000 feet above sea level.



Getting there

After a little more than 24 hours of travel, the team made it safely to the city of Ayacucho where we stayed for 2 days in order to acclimate to the high altitude and buy supplies for our stay in Chakiqpampa. In Ayacucho, we were greeted by Víctor, a Comunidad collaborator, and our trusted guide, driver and liaison to the community. We also met Pía, a kindergarten teacher and Comunidad collaborator who helped us as our primary link to the community and chief Quechua translator.

The trip to Chakiqpampa proved an exciting enterprise. About halfway through the mountains our van broke down. While Víctor stayed behind, the SWB team packed water and some snacks and started the hike to the town of Paccha some 2 hours down the road. Far from being a disaster, the van breaking down allowed the team to enjoy the scenery of the Paccha Valley, including a walk down the Rock Garden, or what our friends from Comunidad call the Garden of the gods. Shortly after arriving to Paccha (news travel fast in the Paccha Valley), we were greeted by Chakiqpampa's mayor and other community members who ferried us on motorcycles and a car the rest of the way.

Once in Chakiqpampa, we were welcomed by a delicious dinner by chef extraordinaire Antonio (who would consistently feed us like kings for the rest of our stay) and our first community meeting. During this meeting we outlined the activities we would perform during the following two weeks and requested the assistance of community members. One of the reasons SWB chose Chakiqpampa as the first community to work with was their level of organization and cooperation with one another, an asset that proved of utmost importance for the success of our visit.





Collecting Data

While working in Chakiqpamap, the SWB team, consisting of 2 professors, 6 Master's students, and a PhD student from the University of Michigan, was divided into two sub-teams. Six were part of "the water team", a brave set of explorers in charge of locating the community's water springs, measuring their flow, performing water quality tests and identifying, along with community members, potential locations for a bigger water reservoir. Meanwhile, the remaining three team members, "the survey team", performed a baseline survey of 32 households. Though this team did not experience such intense and breathtaking (in more ways than one) hiking expeditions as "the water team", they still had the opportunity to walk to the furthest corners of town to find people while working in the fields or at their houses and talking to them for a while.

During our two week stay, SWB members walked all over the valley, located and geo-tagged 8 water springs, measured their water flow and performed 12 water quality tests. Water quality tests included samples from the lagoon located at the northern border of the community. Likewise, members of the survey team obtained a baseline scenario in terms of health and general well-being and wealth for community members. As part of the health aspect of this baseline survey, the height, weight and Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) were measured for all children under and up to 5 years of age.

More important than all the walking and data collection were the team's nightly meetings with the community. The community of Chakiqpampa is very well organized with a President and several committees that take care of community business. The mayor of the Paccha valley is a resident of Chakiqpampa and led the meetings. In these gatherings the community was informed of progress, consulted on further development and, most importantly, tasked with answering key questions about their desires for our work on the project development. Each night after the SWB team would retire to bed, the community would continue on into the night discussing the events and crafting their reply for the next day. They often had to hold votes to decide on which direction to go. This was a beautiful example of allowing a community to exercise their self-determination and ensuring that the process was led by them and not by us, the outsiders. We must say, however, that after all our time spent in Chakiqpampa, we hardly felt as outsiders!





Spending time with the community

Far more than all our meetings, what really made us feel part of the community were all our chances to engage with them in informal settings. For instance, a couple of days after we arrived, Chakiqpampa's children treated us to a school play. This included a series of performances during which we enjoyed some of the region's traditional dances, short sketches, poem recitations and even some excellent a capella songs. Other highlights include a day excursion to the river and going to a traditional fair at Santiago de Pata, a nearby community. Our hike to the river started promptly after breakfast and gave us a chance to enjoy the scenery, brave the cold river waters for a short swim, learn how to use sling shots and how to fish with a net. We also experienced how, in spite of being close by, getting to the river is not only physically demanding but also poses considerable technical problems for using it as a water reliable water source.

Sports and physical activity are an integral part of Chakiqpampa's daily life. When visiting the fair at Santiago de Pata we had the chance to cheer for the Chakiqpampa soccer team. In spite of the high altitude and unrelenting sun, one of our team members had the honor to play with them during a game. The rest of our time in Chakiqpampa, we often played volleyball and soccer with community members, games we would consistently lose, during the time after work and before dinner.

Community agreements and next steps

Thanks to the hard work of all SWB team members and the unrelenting help from community members we gathered enough information to draft potential water project alternatives for the community. As a result of several community meetings, Chakiqpampa and the SWB team reached an agreement on what the first collaboration with SWB would be: the construction of a bigger water reservoir to increase drinking water supply to the community and the construction of 4 aquaponics systems. The water reservoir will attempt to provide a constant water supply throughout the year and allow for sufficient water flow for all community members to connect their houses to the community's water distribution system. Meanwhile, the aquaponics systems will be operated by 4 households to test whether this kind of technology works for them as a way of supplementing their income and food production.

It was so that after two weeks in Chakiqpampa, the SWB team started the trip back home with a lot of new data and even more work ahead in terms of project design and research as we anxiously await returning in November to implement the first part of our agreement with the community.



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